

Peer Writing

The peer writing activity can be implemented in several ways either as a pair or group of students:

- Responsible for sharing their work from brainstorming to final product
- Share their work in varying stages and use their group for feedback and ideas as needed
- Share and assess the final papers prior to submission for a grade

Appropriate Student Level: Any Level

Suggested Class Size: 3 – 100+

Ease of Use Rating: Easy - Moderate

Activity Description:

In a peer-writing project, students may work in small groups or pairs at every stage of the writing process, such as brainstorming, clarifying the statement, shared composition and a final conclusion. The Peer Writing activity is meant to relieve the instructor's burden of reading inferior work and allows the students an opportunity to get critical feedback prior to submitting the assignment.

This activity builds on the peer feedback activity by adding collaboration to more steps to the writing process. An instructor may choose to start with this activity and move slowly toward peer evaluation of the final step. Visa-versa, the instructor may begin with the peer evaluation and find that students need more feedback and input throughout the process. The peer-writing project will help meet that need.

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When forming groups/pairs there are some variables that must be considered, i.e. English as a second language, class standing, etc. Pairs/groups should remain consistent through the semester to allow students to grow together in their writing experiences. Some of those experiences may be shared with the instructor and the rest of the class to help others who are struggling to be successful. Groups/pairs and their products should be assessed regularly to be sure that the writing is actually improving, in rare cases the members may be shifted based on inadequate performance.

An example of one implementation is described in detail by Todd M. Hamilton in a published article "Chemistry and writing; A collaborative writing project" (Citation below)

"In the spring semester of 1999, my General Chemistry students collaborated with students from a freshman writing course. The chemistry students and writing students combined their talents to improve their ability to express scientific ideas in a clear and accurate manner. The

role of the chemistry student was to learn the concepts associated with the chosen topic and express them in their own words to the writing student. The role of the writing student was to incorporate the ideas expressed by the chemistry students into a two- to three-page typed paper.”

K. J. Topping stated in “Formative peer assessment of academic writing between postgraduate students” (citation below)

“Summarizing his review, Topping (1998) concluded that peer assessment of writing appeared capable of yielding outcomes as least as good as teacher assessment, and sometimes better. Formative feedback was variously oral, written and both combined. One or two studies found that peer assessment without personal interactive feedback could be equally effective.”

Also see “Peer Feedback” for other ideas.

References:

Hamilton, Todd M. (2000) “Chemistry and writing: A collaborative writing project”, College Teaching, 48(4); pg. 136

Topping, K.J. (2000) “Formative peer assessment of academic writing between postgraduate students” Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, 25(2); pg. 149